



National Fire and Aviation Executive Board

April 18, 2005

Memorandum

To: Agency Personnel:
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Forest Service

From: National Fire and Aviation Executive Board

Subject: Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Directives Task Group

On June 20, 2003, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council approved implementation direction for the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. Prior to this approval, this document was reviewed by the USDA Office of General Council and the Department of the Interior Solicitor's Office. The official distribution letter was dated April 21, 2004. There were several additional steps that needed to be implemented before the policy was distributed nationally. Those steps have been completed and the document can be found on the fire policy web page:

www.nifc.gov/fire_policy

The National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB) has been tasked to develop common language, unified direction and guidance for agency/bureau manuals, directives, handbooks, and guidelines to complete final implementation of this policy. The NFAEB has chartered the Federal Fire Policy Directives Task Group (DTG) to accomplish this work and implement the tasks outlined in the strategy document.

Clarifying the use of documents found on the NFAEB Directives Task Group web site

When visiting the fire policy web site it is important to understand that the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy document, found under the Strategy for Federal Fire Policy, clarifies the Review and Update for the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, January 2001 and should be the primary reference. For example readers need to use the flowchart found on page 12 of the Strategy for Federal Fire Policy document and not the flowchart in appendix F of the Review and Update for the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, January 2001 document. This page 12 flowchart is the updated flowchart that was referenced in appendix F.

Common Language

The Directives Task Group has been developing consistent interagency language that describes how to implement each of the wildland fire policy statements. This task has been completed and the attached policy language and operational clarification statement for consistent implementation (see attachments #1 and #2) will be used by all agencies in updating their internal and interagency manuals, handbooks and guides.

Common Terminology

The Directives Task Group has been directed to establish common terms and definitions where inconsistencies exist. The DTG worked with the Incident Operations Standards Working Team, which has updated and released the 2005 National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology. The glossary can be found on the NWCG web-page (www.nwcg.gov). Terms and definitions in this document have been reviewed and are consistent with the federal wildland fire policy and related documents. This glossary is the primary glossary for all the Federal Wildland Fire Management agencies. Local or geographic glossaries should supplement and not replace this glossary.

The Directives Task Group has noted some confusion with certain wildland fire management terms and definitions. The Interagency Strategy for Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy established that there are three distinct kinds of Wildland Fire. These definitions are as follows:

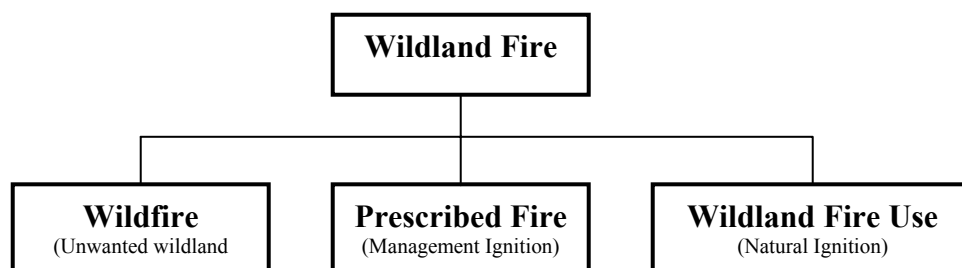
Wildland Fire. Any non-structure fire, that occurs in the wildland. Three distinct types of wildland fire have been defined and include **wildfire**, **wildland fire use** and **prescribed fire**.

Wildfire. An unplanned, unwanted wildland fire, including unauthorized human-caused fires, escaped wildland fire use events, escaped prescribed fire projects, and all other wildland fires where the objective is to put the fire out.

Wildland Fire Use. The application of the appropriate management response to naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined designated areas outlined in Fire Management Plans.

Prescribed Fire. Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements (where applicable) must be met, prior to ignition.

The following diagram depicts the relationship between these terms:



Wildland Fire Management Training Courses

The Directives Task Group is also working to revise NWCG and federal wildland fire management agency fire and fuels management training courses. This work has started and the DTG has identified those courses that are most likely to have fire policy modules. A lesson plan and PowerPoint has been developed for use with Fire Management Leadership and Fire Program Management training. These tools can be used with any training where a fire policy module is part of the course. This lesson plan and PowerPoint can be downloaded from the fire policy web page.

Future Work

Work has also begun on revising federal wildland fire management agency and interagency agreements to reflect fire policy and implementation language changes. A new template for a geographic level agreement will be available for review on the fire policy web site in May of 2005.

The Directives Task Group will continue to participate with the interagency group developing the interagency preparedness review checklists that will identify how well the federal wildland fire management agencies are implementing the 17 fire policy statements, objectives and management intent. This product should be available for use in the 2005 field season.

Please contact the Directives Task Group Co-Chairs Greg Greenhoe (406) 546-5425 or Rick Jensen (208) 387-5710 if you have any questions or concerns.

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Attachment: #1

Common, Interagency Fire Management Policy Language:

In 2001 an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy". This document directs the agencies to work together to develop common language, unified guidance and direction for all agencies and bureaus manuals, handbooks and guidelines to complete final implementation of the policy.

1. Safety: *Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.*
2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability: *The full range of fire management activities will be used to achieve ecosystem sustainability including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.*
3. Response to Wildland Fire: *Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land, resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, across bureau boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and, values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to the fire.*
4. Use of Wildland Fire: *Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance natural and cultural resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved Fire Management Plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.*
5. Rehabilitation and Restoration: *Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.*
6. Protection Priorities: *The protection of human life is the single, overriding suppression priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.*
7. Wildland Urban Interface: *The operational role of the agencies as partners in the wildland/urban interface are wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of Tribal, State, and local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal Fire Protection Agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some Federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may also enter into formal agreements to assist Tribes, State and local governments with full structural protection.)*
8. Planning: *Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire*

Management Plan. Fire Management Plans are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved land management plan. Fire management plans must provide for firefighter and public safety, include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.

9. *Science:* *Fire management plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, fire management plans, and implementation plans.*

10. *Preparedness:* *Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land, and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment and management oversight.*

11. *Suppression:* *Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, and be consistent with resource objectives.*

12. *Prevention:* *Agencies will work together and with their partners and other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.*

13. *Standardization:* *Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.*

14. *Interagency Cooperation:* *Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, ~~and~~ research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of all partners.*

15. *Communication and Education:* *Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.*

16. *Agency Administrator and Employee Roles :* *Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.*

17. *Evaluation:* *Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.*

Attachment: #2

Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation

- 1. Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.*
- 2. Human caused wildfires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.*
- 3. Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.*
- 4. The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.*
- 5. The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression.*
- 6. Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.*
- 7. When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a wildfire, it cannot be returned to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.*